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AUTHOR Donohue, Gregory, Comp.; Rainear, Arthur D., Comp.
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ABSTRACT

The manual contains a survey of literature on the resource room approach to mainstreaming for educable mentally retarded children. Intended to facilitate educational planning in New Jersey, the manual reviews research on such topics as the historical development of special education services; admissions procedures; the impact of judicial decisions that reflect changing attitudes toward special education programing; and mainstreaming issues, including the efficacy of special class placement and the effects of labeling. The inconclusive nature of research findings concerning special placement is discussed, and the resource room as an alternative instructional model is explained. (LH)

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RESOURCE ROOM APPROACH

to

MAINSTREAMING

Survey of the Literature

by

Gregory Donohue
Arthur Rainear

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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RESOURCE ROOM APPROACH TO MAINSTREAMING

Survey of the Literature

The purpose of the Manual is to provide the educational planner with research information that will hopefully contribute to decision making as well as serve as a basis for the promotion and justification for such a mainstreaming program. While the Manual does not include all research related to mainstreaming, the educational planner should find the basic information useful, and is encouraged to supplement the presented research whenever appropriate.

This survey of the Literature Manual was written and compiled by:

Gregory Donohue
Coordinator of Special Education
Ocean City Public Schools
Ocean City, New Jersey

Arthur Rainear
Supervisor of Special Education
Educational Improvement Center
Pitman, New Jersey

INTRODUCTION

Title 18A, Chapter 46 of the New Jersey School Code requires each local public school district to identify and classify all handicapped children between the ages of five and twenty, and to provide an appropriate educational program for them.[1]

Basically, the educational program for handicapped children has been administered through the self-contained classroom model. Children have been grouped in classes according to their major handicap, and limits have been established concerning the number of children allowed per teacher.

The rationale behind this placement is not difficult to understand--protected from having to compete with their more able peers, provided with a curriculum tailored to their needs, and taught by certified, professionally trained teachers, handicapped children should attain their highest potential. However, many educators in the field of special education contend that the self-contained model limits the potential of handicapped children in terms of their academic, social, and emotional needs. Johnson summarizes the present situation as a "paradox" in education:

> It is indeed paradoxical that mentally handicapped children--having teachers especially trained, having more money spent (per capital) on their education, and being designed to provide for their unique needs, should be accomplishing the objectives of their education at the same or lower level than similar mentally handicapped children who have not had those advantages and have been forced to remain in the regular grades.2

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[1] Carl L. Marburger, Rules and Regulations Pursuant to Title 18A, Chapter 46, New Jersey Statutes. (Trenton, New Jersey Dept. of Education, 225 West State St., June 25, 1970), p. 1.

[2] G. O. Johnson, "Special Education for the Mentally Handicapped--a Paradox," Exceptional Children, (October, 1962), p. 66.

Special educators are beginning to respond to this "paradox" by initiating programs which offer "alternatives" to the self-contained classroom. One such "alternative" is the resource room approach which offers both special and regular classroom worlds to children classified according to procedures outlined in Title 18. Schools across the state are implementing the resource room model as a flexible means to integrate handicapped children according to their unique strengths and weaknesses.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

Special education, firmly rooted in American education, from the democratic idea of equal opportunity for all people. The ultimate goal of special education is to prepare children through appropriately planned programs for successful and satisfying living.[3]

Public schools first provided day school programs for educable mentally retarded children in Providence, Rhode Island in 1896. Originally started as an effort to provide instruction for children who were typically excluded from the public schools, these self-contained special classes were felt to embody a more flexible approach to education than institutional placement, since they enabled slow learners to enjoy normal school intercourse with children in regular classroom programs.[4] Even though early authorities recognized the limitations of such placements, special classes continued to develop as the primary means of providing special education assistance to retarded children.[5]

By 1922 there were 191 public school programs for children with varying handicapping conditions in cities with populations over 100,000. Today more than one-half of the nations' school districts either maintain their own special education programs or provide for such programs through cooperative arrangements with other school districts; this brings the opportunity for special education services to far larger numbers of pupils in their homes or neighboring communities.[6]

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3 Howard L. Sparks and Leonard S. Blackman, "What Is Special About Special Education Revisited: the Mentally Retarded," Exceptional Children, (January, 1965), p.242.

4 Robert H. Bruininks and John E. Rynders, "Alternative to Special Class Placement for Educable Mentally Retarded Children," Focus on Exceptional Children, (Sept. 1971) p.1

5 Ibid.

6 F. J. Weintraub, "Recent Influences of Law Regarding the Identification & Educational Placement of Children," Focus on Exceptional Children, (April, 1972), p.2.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN NEW JERSEY

New Jersey has long been a leader among the states in special education. As early as the late nineteenth century, New Jersey began its efforts towards providing services to handicapped children. The New Jersey School for the Deaf (renamed Marie H. Katzenbach School for the Deaf, 1967) was established in 1883. The Vineland State School opened in 1888, and the Training School at Vineland played a prominent role in the development of special education. Attention began to focus on the day care programs under the auspices of the public schools. Classes were organized in some local districts as early as 1905, and it was in 1911 that New Jersey enacted legislation requiring local school boards to establish special classes for the deaf, blind and educationally retarded whenever there were ten or more children, three or more years below grade level. This represented the first mandatory special education law in the United States. By 1913, there were 1,667 children enrolled in public school classes for the retarded.

During this same decade, subsequent legislation was enacted to accommodate physically handicapped. Visually impaired were provided itinerant services through the State Commission for the Blind.

In 1946 the introduction of the principle of equalization provided financial support for a typical pupil. Each special class was considered equivalent to a class of twenty-five regular pupils.

Interpretation of the statutes by the local districts was erroneously assumed and a discrepancy between the principles of free public education and the practices of the schools arose. As a result handicapped children were being

denied the right to an education. Only approximately 50% of handicapped children who could be identified were receiving an appropriate educational program. 10% were totally excluded from the public schools.

The New Jersey Association for Retarded Children Report, and the State Commission to Study the Problems and Needs of Mentally Deficient Persons Report (published under the title FOUND), along with unsuccessful legislation introduced by Assemblyman John Shannon prompted the impetus for enactment of the 1954 Beadleston Bills.

The Beadleston Bills repealed all former legislation and provided newer and more defined statutes regarding the public schools responsibilities for children classified as mentally retarded, physically handicapped, and the visual and hearing impaired, and increased the state's financial aid program.

The Bill further provided for the appointment of County Child Study Supervisors and prompted the position of Director of Special Education within the New Jersey State Department of Education.

To update in 1959, additional Beadleston legislation was enacted covering mental health programs in public schools and education of socially maladjusted or emotionally disturbed children. This law was the result of several years of cooperative effort between educators and persons interested in mental health working together under the auspices of the New Jersey Welfare Council.

Emphasis was placed on the role of the school psychologist, school social worker, learning disability specialist and consulting psychiatrist, acting as a "Child study team" at the local level to evaluate mental health problems which may

interfere with a child's progress in school. School districts employing such personnel in accordance with State standards were (and are) entitled to State aid, to the extent of half their costs. This provision further stimulated local districts to employ professional staff in these categories. By 1966 there were 244 school psychologists so employed, 244 certified school social workers, and more than 300 learning disability specialists.

During this period increasing interest also was evidenced in the problems of the neurologically impaired or "brain damaged" child. The Office of Special Education encouraged school districts to identify and provide for such children by granting State aid for special classes under the 1954 provision for the physically handicapped. The new breed of "learning disability specialists" has contributed to this development. From less than 40 children in approved special classes for the neurologically impaired in 1961, the program has grown to serve more than 4000 children.

The 1959 "Beadleston Act" was further amended by the Crossi Act. This Act permitted (for the first time in New Jersey history) the payment by public school authorities of tuition to private non-profit schools for education of emotionally disturbed children who cannot be appropriately provided for within the public school system.

In 1964 the Commissioner of Education appointed a special 32 member Commission on Education of the Handicapped to review progress since 1954. Its report, Education of Handicapped Children in New Jersey 1954-1964, (and known popularly as "the red book") contained further recommendations relating to: (1) clarifying responsibilities of local districts to provide adequately for

all types of handicapped children, (2) equalizing state aid, (3) strengthening the departmental functions, and (4) increasing the supply of trained personnel, particularly at the leadership level.

Legislation reflecting the recommendations and amending the preceding statutes was enacted in 1966, again through Senator Beadleston. In 1970 through a recodification of all school laws and amendments to legislation evolved Chapter 46, Title 18A as it currently exists.

As a result of the legislation programs for handicapped children continuously increased, New Jersey is presently providing educational services to more than 150,000 children at a cost of approximately 75 million to the state and 75 million to local districts.

During 1971, however, a new trend in special education programming emerged. The concept of mainstreaming was introduced through two experimental projects. The success of these two projects provided the initiative for a tremendous interesting growth in mainstreaming. Presently more than 200 mainstream programs primarily based upon the resource room or learning center now exist. All indications are that before the end of this decade every district in New Jersey will have operational programs designed to mainstream handicapped children.*

* A more detailed history of special education in New Jersey is presented in a Twenty-Year Report on Handicapped prepared for the Commissioner's Advisory Council for the Handicapped, June 1974.

ADMISSIONS TO SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS BY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A local board is required to provide for every otherwise eligible child who is over 5 and under 20, who has not completed high school and who wants to attend. It may provide for handicapped persons who are younger or older.

A child may come to the attention of the school authorities as one needing special education in one of several different ways. The parents may themselves ask the principal, superintendent, director of special services or director of pupil personnel services to consider the child's special needs before or after he starts school. Or a regular teacher may note that the child is not responding as expected, or the school nurse may detect what appears to be a hearing loss or other impairment and make referral.

Referral of a child suspected of being retarded is signal for an evaluation using a "team approach." The regulations of the State Board of Education specify that diagnosis and classification should always include a special medical examination, a psychological evaluation and an educational assessment by approved child study team personnel functioning in a joint manner.

After reviewing their findings, the members of the team consider the educational alternatives which can be offered. These include placement in a special class in the home district, or a program operated by a State agency such as a State College or State School. If none of these is practicable, arrangements may be made for individual instruction or training at home or at school. A retarded child in a special class who needs supplementary instruction such as speech therapy may also receive it as part of his school program. If no appropriate public school facility is available, the school district may elect to assign the child to a private

non-profit day school having an approved non-sectarian program and pay his tuition.

The Chairman of the team reports the recommendations of his team to the local superintendent. The superintendent has the authority to decide on the particular educational placement to be made, with "full consideration given to the report of the examiners."

LITIGATION AND ITS IMPACT

The rights of citizens to an education are guaranteed in the constitutions of the fifty states, however, the judicial system has played a significant role in the process of American education. Concerned parents and special educators have recently used the courts in efforts to ensure special education services for children in districts unwilling to provide such services.[7] Today, the professional special education community has had the judicial sword of justice fall in the direction of the very system which had asked the court's help in establishing special education. A review of the historical implications of judicial decisions in the development of special education and the current trend for special education alternatives is presented.

In 1919, the Supreme Court of Wisconsin ruled Beattie v. State Board of Education, that children could be excluded from school when their presence was harmful to the best interest of the school. Although the child in question was not a physical threat and competed in the academics of the school, the school district argued that his physical condition produced a "depressing and nauseating effect on the teachers and school children," and he required an undue portion of

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[7] Romaine P. Mackie et al., "Statistics on Special Education in the U.S. 1948-1960," The Process of Special Education Administration, ed. C. H. Meisgeier and J.D. King, (Scranton: International Textbook Company, 1970), p.333.

the teachers' time and attention.[8] Today, the feelings of the courts signify a dramatic change in attitude. This attitude is dramatized in the words of Judge Wilkins, Third Judicial District Court of Utah:

> Today it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the right and opportunity of an education. Segregation .... has a detrimental effect upon the children as well as the parents. The policy of placing these children under the Department of Welfare...is usually interpreted as denoting their inferiority, unusualness, and incompetency. Segregation...has a tendency to retard the educational, emotional, and mental development of the children.[9]

The case at point concerned the exclusion of two mentally retarded children from the public schools and placed under the Department of Welfare in Utah.

In the past several years court decisions have alerted many special educators to the need for viable alternatives in special education. In Diana v. the State of California, although the main issue concerned the use of intelligence tests with minority children, the court included in one of its mandates that the school district provide "transitional programs" which would aid decertified students to move back gradually into the regular educational program.[10] Similar cases have been initiated in districts of California and Massachusetts which have resulted in a new "awareness" of the whole concept of exceptionality. In Boston, fifty per cent of those retested were found to be misclassified. In the Stuwart v. Phillips case which brought about this retesting, the plaintiffs sought $20,000 each in compensatory and punitive damages, and asked that no student be placed in special classes until a "Commission on Individual Educational Needs" was established.[11] Two very important functions of this commission would be to

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[8] Weintraub, op. cit., p. 3.

[9] Ibid., p. 3.

[10] Donald L. MacMillan, "Issues and Trends in Special Education," Mental Retardation, (April, 1973), p. 3

[11] Sterling L. Ross, Henry G. DeYoung, and Julius S. Cohen, "Confrontation: Special Education Placement and the Law," Exceptional Children, (Sept., 1971), p. 9.

devise educational programs which attempt to meet individual needs and to provide for continuing revision of special education long after the specific needs which prompted the litigation were satisfied.[12]

Much of today's controversy in special education focuses on the placement process and tests and measurements used to determine special class status. The courts in Washington, D. C. were involved in a case which objected to the physical placement of children in special groupings based on test results. In 1967, the tracking system was cited as a violation of the equal protection clause of the United States Constitution.[13] In his decision Judge Wright noted that:

> ....any system of ability grouping which fails in fact to bring the great majority of children into the mainstream of public education denies the children excluded equal educational opportunity and this encounters the constitutional bar.[14]

The lowest track in this system was for educable mentally retarded children.

Five years earlier in 1962, a woman wandering the streets of our nation's capital was picked up and eventually committed to a mental hospital. The woman filed a writ of habeas corpus but her petition was initially denied. The United States Court of Appeals reversed this decision and in doing so laid down the critical principal of alternatives to the existing system of special education. When there exists a continuum of treatment varying in degree of deprivation of individual liberty, the government can only require that appropriate treatment which is least delimiting to the individual's rights. The court placed the burden of seeking alternatives on the government.[15]

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12 Ibid.

13 Ibid., p. 6.

14 Weintraub, op. cit., p. 9.

15 Weintraub, p. 8.

The importance of all the cases mentioned above must be measured by their total effect on the thinking of special educators. Implementing strategies for change falls squarely on the shoulders of those concerned with developing an educational system which is perceptive of the rights and needs of those whom the system serves. Special education class placement should not be viewed as a dead end for all exceptional children. It is imperative, today, that we devise techniques and procedures which provide effective educational reform.[16]

In Hobson v. Hensen, the presiding judge expressed the seriousness of the total situation in terms of the responsibility for reform:

> It is regrettable...this court must act in an area so alien to its expertise. It would be far better indeed for these great social and political problems to be resolved in the political arena by other branches of government...the judiciary must bear a hand and accept its responsibility to assist in the solution where constitutional rights hang in the balance.[17]

Since the learning problems these children possess cannot be mandated away by the courts, special educators must grasp the opportunity to lead in the change, rather than have it imposed by the courts.

ISSUES ON MAINSTREAMING

The growing concern with prevailing practices in special education is reflected in the current literature exploring the efficacy of special class placement. Much of the present debate over special class placement for retarded children has

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[16] Judith K. Grosenick, "Integration of Exceptional Children into Regular Classes: Research and Procedure," Focus on Exceptional Children, (Oct. 1971) p. 8.

[17] Ross, De Young, and Cohen, op. cit., p. 12.

tended to result in the development of extreme positions--either unqualified endorsement of present practices or strident calls for their abolition.[18]

Many specialists in the field feel that the special class model, which has been in existence for well over thirty years, has not provided mentally retarded children with a viable education.[19] In support of this premise, a survey conducted under the auspices of the United States Office of Education found no clear cut support for either regular or special placement in terms of academic achievement, motivation, or social-emotional adjustment. The aforementioned research can be summarized by stating that special class placement has not significantly influenced the academic achievement of educable retardates.[20] Proponents of this premise have also pointed to research regarding attitudinal effects of special class placement on parents of handicapped children. Research findings by Meyerovitz revealed that parents of educable mentally retarded children in special classes generally showed greater awareness of their child's retardation, but tended to devalue their child to a greater degree than did parents of educable mentally retarded children in regular classes.[21] Those favoring integration are concerned with the retarded child's functioning in the world beyond the school. They feel that preparation for this experience begins in the school setting. The importance of contact with a broad spectrum of students will enable the retarded child to function in a world beyond the school. Segregated special classes reduce the contact of regular students with handicapped students, and this impedes the development of positive attitudes on the part of not only the handicapped child,

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[18] Bruininks and Rynders, op. cit., p. 12.

[19] George R. Taylor, "Special Ed. at the Crossroad: Class Placement for the Educable Mentally Retarded," Mental Retardation, (April, 1970), p. 30.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., p. 31.

but also the regular students; thus, special education may be creating new problems in trying to solve old ones.[22]

Another issue deals with the effects of labeling. Integrationists rely on research which points to a self-perpetuating aberation in the motivational structure of the handicapped child in the special class.[23] Jones feels that labels have the potential to destroy self-esteem in the child, cause loss of status, and reduce optimism in parents and teachers.[24] Finally, the integrationists attack the concept of homogeneous grouping. The contention that the range of I.Q. scores is reduced cannot be denied; however, the range in special education classes of individual differences, and important educational characteristic, is not reduced correspondingly.[25] Bruininks and Rynders are led to conclude:

> No available evidence supports the contention that special classes include children exhibiting similar educational needs, or that such placements lead to greater individualization of instruction. Unfortunately the assumption that children with similar intelligence quotients also resemble each other closely on other behavioral characteristics was seldom questioned in the development and implementation of programs.[26]

Advocates of the self-contained special class are no less adament in the support of their views. The placement of children in a special class is, to a large extent, dependent upon previous teacher rejection; therefore, the special class may save many children from psychological damage. Without the special class possibility, rejected retarded children might have no "escape."[27]

Supporters of special classes state that returning to an educational system, which ignores the promise and possibility of the special class, would disregard

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[22] F.Christoplos and P.Renz, "A Critical Examination of Special Ed. Programs," The Journal of Special Education, III, 4 (1969), p.378.

[23] C.Edward Meyers, "The School Psychologist and Mild Retardation--Report of an Ad Hoc Committee," Mental Retardation, (February, 1973), p. 16.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Bruininks and Rynders, op.cit., p.4.

[26] Ibid., p.5

[27] Taylor, op. cit., p. 30.

the imperatives of educational history which have mandated an alternative to wide-range heterogeneity.[28] If we have no educational segregation, we are setting the goal of teaching to the mean. This rationale indicates that the exceptional child is one who needs special management which is beyond what is possible in the regular classroom.[29]

Proponents of the special class contend that "failures" of special classes may not be attributable to the administrative arrangement, per se, but to the inadequacies of the teacher.[30] Davis argues that a shortage of trained personnel in the field of special education has led school districts to hire teachers whose preparation fails to meet minimal standards as set by a particular state.[31] A study by Jones and Gottfried found that not only did teachers of the educable mentally retarded enjoy little status among colleagues and individuals in teacher training, but also among themselves. Hence, not only are they assigned little prestige in the schools, they accept this lack of prestige as being justified.[32] Mac Millan concludes that "if we attract those threatened by regular classes, or those who are not capable, then the failure of special classes must not be interpreted as a failure of the administrative arrangement, but rather a failure of implementation."[33]

In answering the integrationist on the issue of labeling, the special class advocates turn to MacMillan for a rebuttal:

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[28]Taylor, p. 31.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Donald L. MacMillan, "Special Education for the Mildly Retarded: Servant or Savant," Problems and Issues in the Education of Exceptional Children, ed. R. L. Jones, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971), p. 403.

[31]F. R. Davis, "Demand-degradable Teacher Standards," Mental Retardation, VIII, (February, 1970), p. 39.

[32]MacMillan, "Special Education for the Mildly Retarded," p. 404.

[33]Ibid.

> Once a child is identified, labeled, and placed in a special class, it would again be helpful to understand whether he accepts the label as accurate or whether he denies the accuracy of such a label. Should a child reject the label and find himself in a class with children of clearly inferior status, he is able to derive certain aggrandizements by means of comparison. Hence, he renews his attempt to define the self as adequate and rejects those things that challenge such a positive self perception. It may be that for some low IQ children the special class provides a haven which supports his denial of retardation, whereas a regular class would confront him with evidence and confirmation of his retardation in that his peers would be clearly superior academically. Such a situation would confirm the accuracy of such derogatory labels and disarm the child of his defense mechanisms.[34]

The following statements summarize the position taken by the proponents of special class placement for educable mentally retarded children:

1. Research evidence indicates that mentally retarded children in regular classrooms are usually rejected by more able peers.

2. Mentally retarded children in regular classrooms experience loss of self-esteem because of their inability to compete with more able classroom peers.

3. It is logically absurd to assign children to instruction without considering differences in ability or achievement levels.

4. Evidence on the efficacy of special classes is inconclusive since most studies possess significant flaws in research design.

5. Criticisms of special classes are based ostensibly upon examples of poorly implemented programs.

6. The alternatives to present practices are less desirable and would lead to a return to social promotions as an approach to dealing with mildly retarded children.

7. Properly implemented special classes are optimally suited to deal with the major learning problems of retarded children.

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[34] Ibid., p. 409.

8. Special class arrangements should not be unfairly indicted for mistakes in diagnosis and placement.

9. A democratic philosophy of education does not dictate that all children have the same educational experiences, but that all children receive an equal opportunity to learn according to their individual needs and abilities.

On the other hand, those favoring a change from the self-contained model take the following position:

1. Special class placement isolates the retarded child from normal classroom peers.

2. Special class placement results in stigmatizing the retarded child, resulting in a loss of self-esteem and lowered acceptance by other children.

3. There is little evidence to support the practice of ability grouping for retarded or normal children.

4. Mildly retarded children make as much or more academic progress in regular classrooms as they do in special classrooms.

5. There is little point in investing further energy in improving special classes, since this arrangement poorly serves the social and educational needs of children.

6. Other more flexible administrative and curricular arrangements should be developed to supplement or supplant special classes.

7. Special class arrangements inappropriately place the responsibility for academic failure on children rather than upon schools and teachers.

8. The very existence of special classes encourages the misplacement of many children, particularly children from minority groups.

9. Special class placement is inconsistent with the tenets of a democratic philosophy of education because it isolates retarded from normal children, and vice versa.

RESEARCH STUDIES

Studies by Bennett and Pertsch concluded that academic achievement was significantly better for the educable children who remained in regular classrooms. Pertsch also found personality development higher among regular class boys but no difference among girls regardless of placement.[35]

Five studies conducted in 1957, 1958, and 1959 found more social maturity and better emotional stability among special class retarded children. But, again, academic achievement was higher among retarded children in the regular class.[36] The one exception was a study by Blatt who found no significant differences in achievement between the two groups.[37]

June Jordan completed a study in 1961 of 349 children in twenty-two secondary special classes. She found social relationships in special classes much the same as in regular classes, with low intelligent children maintaining low social positions and the more intelligent children maintaining high social positions. Jorden concluded that educable mentally retarded children may have the same relative social position, regardless of class placement. Since the regular class may be more analogous to post-school life than the artificial environment of the special class, it is conceivable that optimal accommodation for educable mentally retarded children could result in post-school problems of adjustment.[38]

It should be noted that one study, dealing with post-school adjustment of children enrolled in special classes for the educable mentally retarded, found

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35 Sparks and Blackman, op. cit., p. 244.

36 Sparks and Blackman, p. 244.

37 Ibid.

38 June B. Jorden, "Intelligence as a Factor in Special Position-a Sociometric Study in Special Classes for the Mentally Retarded," Dissertation Abstracts, 214: 2987-2988, 1960-1961.

the special class students' adjustment to post-high school life superior to that of equally retarded children who had remained in regular class.[39]

Much of the research cited above had been described as poorly designed, and containing sampling biases which render the results uninterpretable.[40] Kirk mentions the pitfalls inherent in the studies which deal with the special versus regular class debate:

1. Problems in sampling.
2. No control over the length of time spent in special class, prior to the evaluation.
3. Lack of a delineation of a special class, the curriculum, or the teacher qualifications.
4. Measurement instruments used in the studies were often improvised, and therefore of questionable validity and reliability.[41]

Kirk goes on to conclude that "until we obtain well-controlled studies of a longitudinal nature, our opinions about the benefits or detriments of special classes will remain in the realm of conjecture."[42]

Despite the apparent methodological weaknesses, Johnson maintains that "the reported research to date does not support the subjective evaluations of teachers and their contentions that education for mentally handicapped children in special classes is superior to that provided these children in the regular classes."[43] He also maintained that experimental designs have been varied enough that the criticism of comparisons on the wrong variables is not valid.[44]

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[39] R. B. Porter and T. C. Milazzo, "A Comparison of Mentally Retarded Adults Who Attended a Special Class with Those Who Attended Regular School Classes," Exceptional Children, (March, 1958), p. 412.

[40] MacMillan, "Special Education for the Mildly Retarded," p. 403.

[41] Samuel A. Kirk, "Research in Education," Mental Retardation: A Review of Research, eds. H. A. Stevens and R. Huber, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), p. 63.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Johnson, op. cit., p. 66.

[44] Ibid, p. 67.

In one particular study, the authors attempted to control for problems of selection bias by randomly assigning retarded children to regular or special class placement upon entrance to first grade. Attempts were also made in the study to avoid the methodological shortcomings of previous studies by improving the instrumentation, by standardizing the special class curriculum, and by employing recently certified special class teachers.[45] At the end of a two-year period, the educable mentally retarded children in the regular class were found to achieve significantly better in reading. However, by the end of four years, the educable mentally retarded children in self-contained classes had caught up to the former group.[46]

Bruininks and Rynders summarize the evidence from efficacy studies as largely inconclusive and providing little information on the effects of special placement upon children.[47] MacMillan finds the effects of placement on the personality development and personal adjustment of the retarded contradictory and the research design inadequate:

> In conclusion, we do not yet understand the effects of placement on personality. On the one hand we find evidence... indicating that the child suffers in a special class, while on the other the evidence indicates that he suffers in a regular class.... In other words according to the evidence the child can't win---but all the evidence is of questionable validity in terms of sampling bias, lack of control of preplacement experience, and the questionable nature of the criterion instrument.[48]

Bruininks and Rynders further state that,

> Hasty attempts to abolish special classes seem unwise and premature. Instead, special class programs for educable

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[45] MacMillan, "Special Education for the Mildly Retarded," p. 402.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Bruininks and Rynders, op. cit., p. 11.

[48] MacMillan, "Special Education for the Mildly Retarded," p. 409.

mentally retarded children should be restructured to serve only those children who cannot remain in a regular classroom, even with specialized assistance.[49]

RESOURCE ROOM MODEL

In 1966, Gilbert Guerin mentioned the concept of a resource room as an alternative model of instruction. The educable mentally retarded child enrolled in the regular classroom comes to this room part of the school day for an individualized academic program. The materials in the resource room are readily available for classroom use, thus giving the regular class teacher a larger share in the responsibility of educating the retarded student.[50]

A notable application of the resource room model is the Madison School Plan which was developed over a three year period in Santa Monica, California. This plan provides for the instruction of educable mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, and learning disabled students in a setting allowing an increased flow of children between regular classrooms and a specialized resource facility. This plan permits the elimination of traditional disability groupings and the resultant self-contained classrooms.[51]

Assessment and evaluation of the children is based on academic and behavioral functioning; and a major goal of the plan is to increase the amount of time the exceptional child participates in a regular classroom program.[52]

Variations of the Madison Plan have been developed throughout the state of New Jersey. Many school districts in southern New Jersey will be considering adopting such programs for handicapped children, however, if special education is to be truly "special," educators must carefully develop programs which

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49 Bruininks and Rynders, op. cit., p.4.

50 Gilbert R. Guerin, "Special Classes or Resource Rooms," Mental Retardation, (February, 1966), p.40.

51 Frank D. Taylor et al., "A Learning Center Plan for Special Education," Focus on Exceptional Children, (May, 1972), p. 7.

52 Ibid.

availability of services to handicapped children. School districts should view the resource room as an "alternative," not the "answer" to the persistent debate of regular versus special class placement. It would be wise to ponder the following before change and innovation takes place:

1. What are the goals of the program?
2. Whom should the program serve?
3. What are the major constituents of the program?
4. What services (curricula) should be provided?
5. Upon what assumptions is the program based?
6. What are the roles of special and regular education personnel in the program?
7. What criteria should be employed to judge the effectiveness of the program?
8. Under what conditions is the program effective.[53]

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[53] Bruininks and Rynders, op. cit., p. 11.